

WORLD IN BRIEF

Associated Press

GOP bill unlikely to settle passionate health care debate

WASHINGTON — The nation's passionate debate about the role of government in providing health care for citizens and paying the costs is unlikely to be settled by the legislation newly revealed by House Republicans.

With Republicans now controlling the White House and both chambers of Congress, the bill would drive government policy down routes long advocated by conservatives. The course correction would take at least two years to get rolling, and probably longer to show definitive results. If it falls short, it would give rise to a fresh set of health care grievances.

The Republican legislation would limit future federal funding for Medicaid, which covers low-income people, about 1 in 5 Americans. And it would loosen rules that former President Barack Obama's law imposed for health plans directly purchased by individuals, while also scaling back insurance subsidies.

Republicans say their solutions would make Medicaid more cost-efficient without punishing the poor and disabled, while spurring private insurers to offer attractive products for the estimated 20 million consumers in the market for individual policies.

But Democrats say the bill would make many people uninsured, shifting costs to states and hospital systems that act as providers of last resort. Individual policy holders might be able to find low-premium plans, only to be exposed to higher deductibles and copayments.

Trump's new travel ban comes without the chaos of first one

WASHINGTON — When President Donald Trump signed his first travel ban with scant warning and little planning seven days into his presidency, he meant to signal he was a man of action. After the lawsuits, chaos at airports and international criticism, Trump's rewritten travel ban sent a different message: The White House has learned some lessons.

The Trump administration's unveiling of its revised restrictions on travel and refugees was deliberate and cautious, an implicit acknowledgement of some of the unforced errors from the first rollout. The executive order was announced by Trump's Cabinet officials, some of whom felt cut out of consultations on the earlier version. It does not go into effect immediately, giving the world time to assess its impact.

Council: Councilor 'couldn't be prouder'

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Though Mayor Arline LaMear has expressed support for Astoria's Hispanic community, she said in December that the city would likely not seek sanctuary city status. Gutierrez, who endorsed the final draft of the resolution, advised her that the designation could polarize the community.

'Please be safe'

City Councilor Cindy Price said she "really couldn't be prouder" to approve the city's inclusivity resolution.

"I think that the current immigration efforts that are being made are cruel," she said. "They go beyond what we have known for many years throughout Republican and Democratic administrations."

She urged the immigrant community "to do everything you can" to comply with the law and become documented. Undocumented immigrants with families, and those caught in the justice system, should "make plans, just in case, because

this is not a great time," she said.

"This resolution, really, is something that shows our support for our immigrant community but cannot do much," she said, adding: "ICE doesn't need to have local law enforcement help them apprehend people. They know where you live. They know where you work. They know how to find you. They have access to all the public records. So please be safe."

City Councilor Tom Brownson, who said he agrees with Price's assessment, said one of his constituents expressed concern that the resolution, which celebrates "immigrants and refugees of all nations," does not distinguish between "legal" and "illegal" immigrants.

The councilor said he suspects others in the community are sympathetic to this view, but "in my opinion, it's not the city's business to make this distinction."

"It is more important to make clear that we support all the people that contribute to the good of our community and our city," he said.

Audit: ODOT contracts still subject to gamesmanship

Agency has long recognized problem, but done little to fix

By NICK BUDNICK
Capital Bureau

A decade ago, state investigators found that Oregon Department of Transportation contracting had become a cynical sport for one highway construction company — the executives there submitting low bids, then waging over ways they could increase project costs to boost profits.

While that case is old history, a new state audit of ODOT suggests that its contracting system remains vulnerable despite a decade of warnings from the department's own employees of contractor gamesmanship and fraud.

The audit released Monday by Secretary of State Dennis Richardson found that the department fails to employ methods to track "unbalanced" bids, meaning those with unrealistic line-item amounts meant to boost profits.

More than 90 percent of all ODOT-run projects completed from 2011 to 2015 included unbalanced bids, and a quarter of those later featured cost overruns, auditors found.

Significantly, the report echoes the criticisms of a recent \$1 million consultant's review of the department meant to address concerns by the Legislature. The consultant's study noted ODOT's frequent contract overruns and said that compared to other large agencies that contract out construction work, ODOT's contracting was "worst in class."

The new audit comes as state lawmakers weigh whether to approve new fees and taxes on Oregonians, such as a gas tax hike, which will be spent on hefty road and bridge contracts meant to address a backlog of unmet needs.

The Secretary of State auditors' critique of ODOT bidder gamesmanship did not come as news to Director Matt Garrett, who has run the department for more than a decade. In fact, the new audit's findings are strikingly similar to those of a 2008 report on unbalanced bidding issued by ODOT's internal



Danny Miller/The Daily Astorian

Oregon Department of Transportation Director Matthew Garrett speaks last year on the Lewis and Clark River Bridge in Astoria. An audit released Monday by the Secretary of State's Office says Department of Transportation contractors often lowball bids to win contracts, then inflate costs through contract change orders.

auditors — suggesting that the same issues remain.

In 2008, the ODOT auditors said new software to track unbalanced bidding could save millions of dollars for a relatively minor upfront cost.

The department's response to the latest audit — which makes a similar recommendation about software — closely echoes the department's response a decade ago. It questions the audit's methodology, but agrees with the recommendation to closely track line items in the bid through to project completion.

New audit findings

The Department of Transportation spends about \$400 million a year on construction. In the five-year span reviewed by the Secretary of State auditors, ODOT oversaw 413 construction projects that cost \$1.8 billion.

Oregon uses a traditional low-bid system of contracting in which bidders on projects list the expected cost and quantities for line items in the project — such as asphalt, flagging costs and trucking.

But to win the bid, contractors sometimes lowball quantities of particular line items, accompanied by a higher-than-realistic price per unit. That paves the way for a winning low bid that then can be inflated through contract change orders, auditors found.

In fact, 61 percent of the projects reviewed by the Secretary of State had one or more unbalanced bid items that were at least double their estimated

cost, according to the audit. Meanwhile, contractors can lowball other line items, pricing them at 1 cent, to keep overall prices low.

ODOT doesn't deny the system allows this.

"Contractors may make a token bid (i.e., penny bids), front-load bids, or price-unit bids with large variations from the final engineer's estimate in an attempt to minimize risk and maximize profits while keeping the overall bid low," admitted ODOT Highway Administrator Paul Mather in his response. At the heart of the problem is that the department uses different software at the different stages of project cost estimation, bidding and project completion, making it impossible to track patterns in how bid line items change over time.

"If agency leadership decides to implement enhanced tracking and scrutinize unbalanced bidding, the state could potentially realize significant savings by avoiding project cost increases. Inaction will continue the status quo of incomplete data that prevents ODOT from evaluating unbalanced bidding that can lead to project cost increases," according to the new report.

Mather, in the department's official response, questioned the auditor's methodology saying it failed to show that unbalanced bidding played a role in the department's cost overruns. He noted that the total cost of the projects came in under their estimated cost, reflecting that ODOT sometimes benefits when contractors figure out

cheaper ways of completing projects.

Not new issues

In 2003, then-Gov. Ted Kulongoski signed a \$2.5 billion transportation package intended for new roads and bridges, with the bulk of the work intended to be contracted out.

Over the years, however, problems arose with contractors, including with Ross Brothers — a firm that the Oregon Department of Justice in 2008 accused of civil racketeering using lowball bids and padded billing. That's the firm where executives were accused of making wagers over what change orders they could persuade ODOT to approve.

The following year, the state and Ross Brothers settled when the company agreed to dissolve without admitting wrongdoing. In the wake of the settlement, ODOT Director Garrett vowed victory. He said the agency was making changes to ensure Ross Brothers types of problems didn't happen again.

But internally, records show, the department resisted recommendations from its own audits on how to address the problem of unethical lowball bidding.

Mary Hull Caballero, now the city of Portland's elected auditor, formerly worked at ODOT's internal audits unit. In 2008, she did the research for the audit that similarly called for investing in a software tracking system to monitor patterns of unbalanced bidding. She raised the specter of whether unbalanced bids and poor contract tracking were contributing to an "inflation spiral" of overspending by ODOT.

Hull Caballero found other states had reported good savings from software sold by the American Association of State Transportation Officials. Michigan, for example, more than made up their initial costs in a single year.

In its response, ODOT responded that it didn't have money for the software, but would form a "task group" to look at the recommendation.

Now, the new audit and the \$1 million consultant's review indicate the department's contracting continues to be a problem.

ODOT, for its part, says it already is on top of the issue.

Fire fees: If classification changes, landowners will be notified

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lots and 600 landowners. But some of the landowners did not know their lands had been reclassified until January.

The annual property tax fee assessed to owners of for-

estlands in the Astoria district is \$1.21 per acre. Owners are charged a minimum assessment of \$18.75 each year. A \$47.50 surcharge can be added if property owners build additional structures on their land.

About 70 landowners gathered for a public meeting in Seaside in February, many of whom expressed their frustrations in testy exchanges with officials.

Affected landowners will be notified by mail and phone

if there are any changes made to their property's classification, Goody said. While the public meeting's date and time is not set yet, it will take place at the Astoria District Office at 92219 Highway 202 in Astoria.

THE DAILY ASTORIAN TV LISTINGS Evening listings TUESDAY

TUESDAY EVENING												MARCH 7	
A	L	6 PM	6:30	7 PM	7:30	8 PM	8:30	9 PM	9:30	10 PM	10:30	11 PM	11:30
2	KATU	(2) KATU News at 6			Wheel of Fortune	The Middle (N)	Amer. Housewife	Fresh Off-Boat (N)	Real O'Neals (N)	People "Celebrity Love Stories" (P) (N)		KATU News at 11	(35) Jimmy Kimmel
3	KOMO	(4) KOMO 4 News			Wheel of Fortune	The Middle (N)	Amer. Housewife	Fresh Off-Boat (N)	Real O'Neals (N)	People "Celebrity Love Stories" (P) (N)		KOMO 4 News	(35) Jimmy Kimmel
5	KING	(5) NBC Nightly News	KING 5 News	KING 5 News	Evening	The Voice "The Blind Auditions" (N)		This Is Us "What Now?" (N)		Chicago Justice "See Something" (N)		KING 5 News	(35) Tonight Show
6	KOIN	(6) KOIN Local 6 at 6	CBS Evening News	Extra	Ent. Tonight	NCIS "What Lies Above"		Bull "Free Fall" (N)		NCIS: New Orleans "The Last Stand" (N)		KOIN 6 News @ 11	(35) S. Colbert
7	KIRO	(7) KIRO 7 News	CBS Evening News	The Insider	Ent. Tonight	NCIS "What Lies Above"		Bull "Free Fall" (N)		NCIS: New Orleans "The Last Stand" (N)		KIRO News	(35) S. Colbert
8	KGW	(8) KGW News at 6:00 p.m.		Live at Seven	Inside Edition	The Voice "The Blind Auditions" (N)		This Is Us "What Now?" (N)		Chicago Justice "See Something" (N)		KGW News at 11	(35) Tonight Show
9	KRCW	(9) Last Man Standing	Last Man Standing	Modern Family	Modern Family	The Flash "The Wrath of Savitar" (N)		LegendTomor. "Land of the Lost" (N)		KGW Justice at 10	Two and a Half	Two and a Half	Met Your Mother
10	KOPB	(10) Ask-Old House	Business (N)	PBS NewsHour		Oregon Revealed		Roy Orbison: Black & White Night 30				Forever Painless	
12	KPTV	(12) 6 O'Clock News		Family Feud	Family Feud	New Girl (N)	The Mick (N)	Bones "The Steel in the Wheels" (N)		10 O'Clock News		11 O'Clock News	2 Broke Girls
13	KPDx	(13) Mike & Molly	Mike & Molly	Big Bang Theory	Big Bang Theory	FOX 12's 8 O'Clock News on PDX-TV		FOX 12's 9 O'Clock News on PDX-TV		Family Guy		American Dad	Cleveland Show
14	KCPQ	(14) Modern Family	Modern Family	Big Bang Theory	Big Bang Theory	New Girl (N)	The Mick (N)	Bones "The Steel in the Wheels" (N)		Q13 News at 10		Q13 News	The Simpsons
20	TBS	(20) Seinfeld	Seinfeld	Seinfeld		Big Bang Theory	Big Bang Theory	Big Bang Theory	Big Bang Theory	The Detour (N)	Big Bang Theory	Conan (N)	
21	KZJQ	(21) Two and a Half	Two and a Half	Last Man Standing	Last Man Standing	Modern Family	Modern Family	Q13 News at 9		Big Bang Theory	Big Bang Theory	Friends	Friends
29	ESPN	(29) NCAA Basketball WCC Tournament (L)				SportsCenter		SportsCenter				SportsCenter	SportsCenter
30	ESPN2	(30) NCAA Basketball Summit League Tournament (L)				Tennis BNP Paribas Showdown				Jalen & Jacoby	NFL Live	Jalen & Jacoby	Jalen & Jacoby
31	NICK	(31) Henry Danger	Henry Danger	Paradise Run	The Thundermans	The Thundermans	NickyRickyDicky	Full House	Full House	Full House	Full House	Friends	Friends
32	DISN	(32) Bunk'd	Bizaardvark	K.C. Undercover	Good Luck Charlie	Stuck in Middle	Good Luck 1/2	Liv and Maddie	Liv and Maddie	Bunk'd	Bunk'd	Jessie	Jessie
34	FAM	(34) The Middle	*** The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn Part 1	(11) Robert Pattinson, Kristen Stewart.				Switched Birth "Four Ages in Life" (N)		Shadowhunters "By the Light of Dawn"		The 700 Club	
35	FMC	(35) (20) *** A Million Ways to Die in the West	(14) Charlize Theron, Amanda Seyfried, Seth MacFarlane.	(35) FXM Presents				*** The Dictator (12) Anna Farris, Sacha Baron Cohen.	(45) FXM Presents			Revenge of the Nerds II: Nerds in Pa...	
36	LIFE	(36) Dance Moms		Dance Moms				Little Women: LA "Tough Crowd" (N)		The Pop Game (N)		Celebrity Wife Swap	
38	ROOT	(38) (430) Wrestling	Mark Fed (N)	MLB Baseball Spring Training Texas Rangers vs. Seattle Mariners Site: Peoria Stadium -- Peoria, Ariz.				Mark Few		H.S. Basketball WIAA Tournament Girls 3A Championship			
39	FST	(39) NCAA Basketball Big East Tournament (L)				Fox College Hoops	Fox Sports Live	Speak for Yourself		Skip and Shannon: Undisputed Opinions on the biggest sports topics of the day.			
43	SPiE	(43) Cops	Cops	Cops	Cops	Cops	Cops	Cops	Cops	Cops	Cops	Cops	Cops
44	COM	(44) Futurama	Futurama	Futurama	Futurama	Tosh.0	Tosh.0	Tosh.0	Tosh.0	Tosh.0 (N)	Detroiters (N)	The Daily Show (N) @midnight (N)	
45	HIST	(45) The Curse of Oak Island		The Curse of Oak Island		Curse of Oak Island		The Curse of Oak Island		Hunting Hitler		The Curse of Oak Island	
46	A&E	(46) Intervention "Jasmine"		Intervention "Sandi"		Intervention "Gina/Kaila"		Intervention "Matthew/Olivia"		Intervention "Karissa"		(05) To Be Announced	
47	TLC	(47) Say Yes-Dress	Say Yes-Dress	To Be Announced		My Big Life "I Kissed a Girl" (N)		My Big "Whitney Calls in Backup" (N)		In Charge "Pooh to the Rescue" (P) (N)		(05) My Big "Whitney Calls in Backup"	
48	DISC	(48) Moonshiners "Thunder Pumpkins"		Moonshiners "Two Pot Bang Bang"		Moonshiners: Outlaw Cuts (N)		Moonshiners (N)		Killing Fields (N)		Moonshiners	
49	NGEO	(49) Battleground Afgh	"Homeward Bound"	Inside Combat Rescue "Fog of War"		Inside the Vietnam War First hand accounts from American Vietnam Veterans.						UncensoredW "The Deep South" (N)	
50	TNT	(50) *** Journey 2: The Mysterious Island	(12) Vanessa Hudgens, Josh Hutcherson.			*** Edge of Tomorrow (2014, Sci-Fi) Emily Blunt, Noah Taylor, Tom Cruise.				** Paycheck (2003, Sci-Fi) Uma Thurman, Ben Affleck.			
51	AMC	(51) (5:00) *** Titanic (1997, Drama) Kate Winslet, Billy Zane, Leonardo DiCaprio.						*** Titanic (1997, Drama) Kate Winslet, Billy Zane, Leonardo DiCaprio.					
52	USA	(52) Chrissy Knows	Chrissy Knows	Chrissy Knows	Chrissy Knows	WWE Smackdown! WWE superstars do battle in long-running rivalries.		Chrissy Knows (N) Chrissy Knows		Modern Family	Modern Family	Modern Family	Modern Family
53	FOOD	(53) Chopped "Short and Sweetbreads"		Chopped "Beer Here!"		Chopped "Beast Feast"		Chopped "Hunny Party"		Chopped "Something Dumping" (N)		Chopped "Tortellini Trials"	
54	HGTV	(54) Fixer Upper		Fixer Upper		Fixer "Tight Budgets and Big Dreams"		Fixer Upper (N)		House Hunters (N) House Hunters (N)		Fixer "Traditional Goes Ultra Modern"	
55	FX	(55) (5:00) The Equalizer (14) Chloë Grace Moretz, Marton Csokas, Denzel Washington.				*** Lucy (2014, Action) Morgan Freeman, Analeigh Tipton, Scarlett Johansson.				The Americans "Amber Waves" (SP) (N)		The Americans "Amber Waves"	
56	CNN	(56) Anderson Cooper 360		CNN Tonight With Don Lemon		CNN Tonight With Don Lemon		Anderson Cooper 360		Anderson Cooper 360		CNN Tonight With Don Lemon	
58	FNC	(58) Tucker Carlson Tonight		Hannity		The O'Reilly Factor		Tucker Carlson Tonight		Hannity		The First 100 Days	
61	CNBC	(61) Shark Tank		The Partner (N)		Shark Tank		Shark Tank		Shark Tank		Billion Dollar Buyer	Paid Program
63	BRAV	(63) Beverly Hills "Backed Into a Corner"		Beverly Hills "Feeding a Need"		Beverly Hills Social (N)		Beverly Hills (N)		Imposters "Is a Shark Good or Bad?" (N)		WatchWhat (N) Beverly Hills	
64	TCM	(64) (1969) The Night of the Iguana		(315) *** Anne of the Thousand Days	(1969, History) Richard Burton, Irene Papas, Genevieve Bujold.			*** Look Back in Anger (1958, Drama)		*** Resident Evil: Retribution (12) Sienna Guillory, Milla Jovovich.			
65	SYFY	(65) Face Off "Killer Instinct"		Face Off "Serpent Soldiers"		Face Off "Wasteland Warriors"		Face Off "Puppet Masters" (N)		*** Resident Evil: Retribution (12) Sienna Guillory, Milla Jovovich.			
69	RFD	(69) (5:30) Cattlemen	Chasing-Madison	Downunder Horseman.		Chris Cox	Rural Eve. News	Ag PhD		Cattlemen to Cattlemen		Chasing-Madison	Product Showcase